

# General George Gordon Meade



*As Portrayed By Joe Schafer*



George Gordon Meade was born on December 31, 1815 in Cádiz, Spain, where his father was a naval agent for the U.S. government. He graduated from West Point in 1835, and after serving but one year in the army, Meade resigned to begin practice as a civil engineer. He performed surveys and designed lighthouses along the New Jersey and Florida coasts, and was frequently employed by the government.

Meade reentered military service in 1842. He served with distinction on the staffs of Generals Zachary Taylor and Robert Patterson in the Mexican War.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Meade was placed in command of the 2nd Brigade of the Pennsylvania Reserves, soon rising to the command of a division, and joining his fortunes permanently to those of the Army of the Potomac. At the Battle of Glendale (Peninsula Campaign), Meade was wounded in the arm, back, and side. He recovered from his wounds in time to command his brigade at the Second Battle of Bull Run. Meade led a division at the battles of Antietam and Fredericksburg, where he particularly distinguished himself. For this action, he received command of the V Corps, which he led at Chancellorsville the following spring. Meade's corps was left in reserve for most of the battle.

In late June 1863, General Joseph Hooker resigned the command of the Army of the Potomac. In the early morning hours of June 28, 1863, a messenger from President Lincoln arrived to inform Meade of his appointment as Hooker's replacement. Meade was taken by surprise and later wrote to



his wife that when the officer entered his tent to wake him, he assumed he was being arrested. Meade had not actively sought command and was not the president's first choice.

Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was invading Pennsylvania and Meade had little knowledge of the disposition of the rest of his new army. Only three days later he confronted Lee in the battle of Gettysburg, July 1 to July 3, 1863, where he won the battle that is considered a turning point of the war.

Meade was criticized for not aggressively pursuing the Confederates during their retreat. At one point, the Army of Northern Virginia was extremely vulnerable with their backs to the rain-swollen Potomac River, but they were able to erect strong defensive positions before

Meade could organize an effective attack. For the remainder of the fall campaign of 1863, Meade was outmaneuvered by Lee and withdrew after fighting minor, inconclusive battles.

When Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant was appointed commander of all Union armies in March 1864, Meade continued to command the Army of the Potomac under Grant, although Meade and Grant had various differences that caused friction between them.



At the end of the war, General Meade was commissioner of Fairmount Park in Pennsylvania from 1866 until his death. He also held various military commands, including the Military Division of the Atlantic, the Department of the East, and the Department of the South. Meade died on November 6, 1872 in Philadelphia from complications of his old wounds, combined with pneumonia, and is buried in Laurel Hill Cemetery.



*Joseph Schafer, who portrays General Meade, does so to shed some light on one of the most underrated Generals in the Union Army. Mr. Schafer has been in the hobby for more than thirty years. He is a Viet Nam vet and retired after twenty three years in the Army. Mr. Schafer lives in Warminster, PA.*